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Connallys say 'no' to conspiracy buffs

His family refuses to let JFK killing theorists have bullet fragments from Texan's body

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EXAMINER WASHINGTON BUREAU

AP/MARIO VILLAFUERTE

Nellie Connally kisses *the casket with children, from left: Sharon Ammann, Mark Connally, John Connally III.*

WASHINGTON — The late John Connally's family rejected a request from the FBI that bullet fragments be removed from the former Texas governor's body in an effort to learn more about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, according to a federal official.

Connally, who was wounded while riding in the presidential limousine in Dallas when Kennedy was killed Nov. 22, 1963, died of pulmonary fibrosis Tuesday. He was buried Thursday.

Assassination research groups asked Attorney General Janet Reno on Wednesday to seek the removal of bullet fragments believed to be lodged in Connally's wrist and thigh so the pieces could be analyzed.

The researchers contended that the lead particles could prove that Connally and Kennedy had been shot by two gunmen.

The federal official, speaking on condition that he not be identified by name or department affiliation, said Thursday that an FBI agent in Dallas had asked the family for permission to remove the bullet fragments and that the family had refused.

Friends of the family called the bullet-extraction request bizarre and motivated by a desire on the part of the assassination groups for publicity.

"It's an appalling attempt to capitalize on Gov. Connally's death to gain publicity for worn-out theories," Julian Read, a family spokesman, told the Dallas Morning News.

The researchers argue that tests might show Kennedy and Connally were hit by different bullets, which

could disprove the so-called "single-bullet" theory, which formed the core of the Warren Commission's finding on the assassination.

In the single-bullet theory, one bullet wounded both men seconds before another bullet mortally wounded Kennedy in the head.

The researchers' hopes were apparently extinguished Thursday with the burial of Connally in Austin. The federal official said the matter would not be pursued further.

Bullet fragments taken from Connally were examined in the late 1970s by the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

The panel concluded that the fragments came from the same bullet that struck Kennedy. Nonetheless, the assassination groups contended, the fragments remaining in Connally were unique because they had not been disturbed.

Larry Howard, director of the JFK Assassination Information Center in Dallas, one of the groups that requested the procedure on Connally, said he was disappointed with the outcome, but he wasn't giving up.

"They buried him and we tried, but we're not going to quit," Howard said. He said he would seek access to Connally's medical records and X-rays in an effort to shed light on his theories.

The other group making the request was the Washington-based Assassination Archives and Research Center.